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A

THIRD LETTER

TO

LORD JOHN RUSSELL,

CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS ON THE

MINISTERIAL SPEECHES

DELIVERED DURING

THE LATE SUGAR DEBATES.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING COPIES OF THE DESPATCHES

OF SIR C. GREY AND LORD HARRIS.

BY JACOB OMNIUM.

"The price of sugar has fallen very low, from causes which I do not think it necessary now to enter into. I think it will rise again, from causes which I cannot now foresee."—*Mr. Under-Secretary Hawes' views as to the past and future of the British Sugar Colonies, communicated to Lord George Bentinck's Committee. Ques.* 16,369.

LONDON:
JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.
1848.

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1931

THIRD LETTER

TO

LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

My Lord,

The intemperate language into which Lord George Bentinck was betrayed, in his indignation at the suppression on the part of Government of documents, which must have materially influenced the decision of the Committee of which he was Chairman, had they not been withheld, was a most fortunate circumstance for the statesmen whose conduct he impugned.

And it is paying no compliment to your Lordship to say, that you made the best use of the advantage thus conceded to you, in order to divert the attention of the House of Commons from the real question at issue.

But as I have carefully abstained from all intemperate language, and have made no misstatements, or advanced any accusation which has not been proved, I beg to remind your Lordship that the charges which I made against the chiefs of the Colonial Office remain as yet unsatisfied. Mystification and evasion have been substituted for generous admission of error, and whatever explanation has

been vouchsafed, has been, to use Lord Grey's own definition of it, entirely "conjectural." I predicted in my late letter to your Lordship, the "lofty sentiments" which would be adduced in Parliament in defence of "very shuffling work," and you see, my Lord, that I was a true prophet. I confess that the high-flown rebukes of Lord Grey had very little effect on my spirits. I expected them. It is the usual way in which inconvenient charges are met by great men when they cannot disprove them.

I have, however, no unwillingness to bear the blame of any errors which I may have really committed in this business, and I therefore plead guilty to "having exercised a plausible ingenuity in collating passages from speeches in Hansard, with extracts from despatches in Blue Books,"* inasmuch as I did refer to the last speech which Lord Grey delivered on the Sugar question in February, and collated it with the Jamaica memorial and the despatches of Lord Harris, not as soon as I wished to put it to that test, but as soon as I could obtain access to them; neither of which proceedings exhibit, I trust, any very deep spirit of unfairness or malignity. It is a practice in which I mean to persevere, as long as the Colonial Office permits itself to deal foul blows against the commercial body to which I belong, and as long as you, my Lord, and the public, will do me the honour to read my letters.

* See Lord Grey's Speech, Times, June 28.

I must however observe, that I have never presumed to insinuate anything against Lord Grey's previous character, for in no man's opinion did it stand higher than in my own, until these late astounding disclosures—but I do loudly protest against the doctrine which you and his Lordship have attempted to lay down—that it is base and dangerous, on any evidence, no matter how convincing, to believe and assert that British statesmen can be dishonest. History teems with melancholy proofs that the most high-minded and virtuous have fallen; and, when those to whom important charges are confided, are so unfortunate as to betray them, it is but just and wholesome for the interests of society that their fall should be severe.

Nor can I allow that the probability of discovery is to be admitted as a proof that no deceit has been intended. We all know that honesty is the wisest policy, yet we all know that a contrary policy is often adopted; and were such a plea as the folly of fraud to be received as evidence that none had been perpetrated, your Lordship must clearly see that punishment would rarely, if ever, overtake a political culprit.

I conceive that the arguments by which Lord Grey has attempted to justify the manner in which he perverted the Jamaica memorial, are more detrimental to his own character, and to the interest of public morality, than the act itself.

When accused of distorting the representations

of ruin forwarded to him by Mr. Whitelock and his brother planters, into proofs of their prosperity, Lord Grey is reported to have answered—"Undoubtedly I did so, and I wish to know which of your Lordships ever made a speech in this House without quoting only those parts of a document which he thought important to the case?"

Now, I believe, I am fairly stating the line of argument, which Lord Grey supported by the introduction of the Jamaica memorial in its mutilated form, thus:—he admitted the existing distress in Jamaica—he attributed that distress mainly to absenteeism—and in order to shew that the ruined absentee proprietors were in course of replacement by successful resident planters, he adduced this memorial, signed by fifteen men, who, he declared, had all, save one, purchased or leased their properties since emancipation, observing, that "so far from believing that the prospects of Jamaica were bad; he was not aware of any part of the British dominions in which there was so favourable a prospect for the investment of capital at that moment as Jamaica."

He entirely suppressed the fact, that the sole object of the Memorialists in addressing him, the Minister to whose especial care their destiny was confided, was to lay before him the details of their "desperate and hopeless condition," of the utter annihilation of the £142,000 which they had cast into the gulph of West Indian investment, into

which he was thus dishonestly attempting to lure others through their means.

And Lord Grey has actually attempted to justify this act of his. He has declared his conviction, that every member of the House of Lords would do as he has done. He has even been faintly cheered by the other Whig Lords for that assertion.

If such an act be justifiable, then may the atheist quote Scripture to justify his incredulity. The text "there is no God" will serve his purpose well, if he may legitimately omit the words prefixed thereto, "the fool hath said in his heart," and maintain, like Lord Grey, "that he has only taken that part of the document which he thinks important to his case."

As Lord Grey has not thought it worth his while to notice the fact, that in February last, he made statements to the House of Lords respecting the "strike" in Guiana, on the faith of a paragraph in a colonial paper, which was utterly untrue, in direct contradiction to Governor Light's despatches, which had arrived in the same bag as the paper from which he quoted; it is unnecessary that I should say more on that point, except that an explanation or apology is clearly due to the House of Lords whom he misled, and to the colonists, whose private representations he thus contradicted on such insufficient authority.

I will now proceed to remark on the despatches of Lord Harris, passed over in silence by Ministers during the Sugar debates of February, and withheld

from Members of the House until those debates were terminated. I have printed the most important of them in the Appendix, in order that your Lordship and the public may judge whether it was of a nature to be thus neglected.*

They were moved for on the 26th November. Parliament did not break up for four weeks afterwards. The Colonial Office was not then harassed by the importunate cravings of Lord George Bentinck's committee for voluminous documents. The papers asked for were very brief; the most important of them being comprised in thirty lines of print. Yet they were not communicated to Members until ten weeks after they were asked for; too late to be of any use. The Ministers, who quoted Dr. Jelly and Mr. Scotland so largely, carefully abstained from alluding to them during the debate.

Mr. Hawes, the Under Secretary, when questioned before Lord George Bentinck's Committee, as to the cause of their non-delivery, admitted that there had been an unnecessary delay, partly caused by his anxiety to add to them "other despatches of great importance, which had arrived just before the meeting of Parliament," and partly from the misconduct of parties, over whom he had no control—printers and copyists. But as upon examination, it turned out that these Trinidad papers, when delivered, contained no "despatches of great importance, which had arrived just before

* See Appendix, No. 1.

the meeting of Parliament," or indeed any despatch whatever which had not been received more than a month before that event, and that no such "important despatches" as those to which Mr. Hawes attributed their delay, were in existence; the unfortunate Under Secretary was driven from his original line of defence, and forced to declare in the House of Commons that "there had been no delay at all."

It is very clear, therefore, that his explanation of the same circumstances before the Committee, and to the House of Commons, cannot both be correct, and that equivocation of that nature inevitably and justifiably engenders suspicion.

I will further call your Lordship's attention to one of the "dodges" by which Mr. Hawes attempted to slip out of the charge made against the Colonial Office, of suppressing Sir C. Grey's despatch, a charge which, however, was not brought forward by me. If he is innocent, he does himself infinite injustice by condescending to have recourse to such paltry manœuvres.

That despatch enclosed several calculations as to the cost of producing sugar in Jamaica, supplied at the request of the Governor of that Island, by the planters. Sir C. Grey, in forwarding it, points out properly enough certain local circumstances, which might cause those calculations to mislead Lord Grey, and which he explains, observing at the same time, that it was clearly not the intention of the planters to deceive his Lordship.

Sir C. Grey concludes this despatch by stating

"that after the most pains-taking and comprehensive review of the whole subject which he was capable of making," he conceived that unless the greater portion of the sugar cultivation of Jamaica was to be abandoned, a protection of 10*s* per cwt. was indispensable.

Now the ingenious Mr. Hawes, by reading the despatch backwards to the House, attempted to prove that it was in fact a document favourable to the views of Government, and that therefore he could have had no motive for suppressing it; for that although Sir C. Grey certainly did advise a protecting duty, the object of the despatch was to caution Lord Grey against putting any faith in the representations of the planters!*

It is in vain, my Lord, to exhort or expect that the West Indian colonists should bear up manfully and successfully against the difficulties which surround them, when they hear that such proceedings as these on the part of the chiefs of the Colonial Office are tolerated in this country. Lord Grey and Mr. Hawes, disagreeing apparently on nearly every other point, cordially concur in misrepresenting those whom it is their duty to protect against misrepresentation, and it must be admitted that in doing so they do not discriminate very nicely between the accepted laws of right and wrong.

Lord Grey writes clever but somewhat tardy despatches on the importance of immigration—Mr. Hawes considers the labour market fully supplied;

* See Appendix, No. 3.

and declares with some reason, I believe, that *he* is quite ignorant whence immigration could be obtained. Lord Grey denounces high wages as the bane of the sugar colonies, and has ruined half the planters of Guiana and Trinidad in order to effect a sudden reduction—Mr. Hawes assures the House of Commons that in his opinion, wages are not high enough in the West Indies. Lord Grey admits that he is convinced of the necessity of stringent laws with regard to squatting, trespass and enforcement of contracts, and declares that he is prepared to sanction them—Mr. Hawes holds the West Indians up to the censure of the professional philanthropists of this country, for having attempted to enact any laws at all, against offences which are daily visited in England with far heavier penalties than the planters ever wished to inflict. Lord Grey has stated that there is no colony which has distinguished itself more than British Guiana, by its endeavours to improve its agriculture and manufacture—Mr. Hawes, turning those very endeavours to our discredit—brings forward the report of our agricultural chymist to shew that we are supine and wasteful, because still further improvements are stated by him to be feasible, and argues that until we have adopted every improvement which science can suggest, we have no right to look to Government for aid. He forgets, or rather perhaps he never knew, that the ameliorations pointed out can only be accomplished by more careful and regular

agriculture, and more attentive manufacture, and that Lord Harris has clearly shewn, that it is not in the power of the planters, under the circumstances in which they are at present placed, to command either. Capital too is necessary. The Act of 1846, by lowering prices, has ruined the present sugar growers, and annihilated the public credit of the colonies; and as there are no other British adventurers sanguine enough to desire to step into their shoes, Mr. Hawes ought to point out from whence it is to be obtained, before he censures us for not employing it.

Coming to a hasty conclusion on very superficial and entirely theoretical knowledge, and obstinately adhering to that conclusion, when results have proved it to be imbecile and mischievous; appears just now to be considered in Downing Street, as the best method of "taking large and comprehensive views of a subject."

Lord Grey has announced that his system of colonial government is, to disregard the opinions of the distinguished men who govern our colonies—whom he professes to view merely in the light of fact collectors for himself and Mr. Hawes; and when it is considered that he further reserves to himself the privilege of suppressing and disregarding such of these facts as do not chance to tally with his preconceived opinions, formed without either practical or local knowledge, it can no longer be a subject of wonder that his policy has proved, in two

short years, as fatal to the prosperity and loyalty of our transmarine possessions, as has been his interference with regard to the immigrant coolies of Trinidad to the lives of the poor Indians who have perished under his mislegislation. I think, however, that it would have been wiser in Lord Grey to have abstained from making public this singular declaration. There have been as able men as himself, and far better public servants, employed of late years in the administration of our colonies; and I very much doubt whether Lords Metcalfe, Dalhousie, Elgin, or Harris, would have accepted, or continued to hold office on the insulting terms on which Lord Grey now informs the Governors of our colonies that they are to retain their governments. One of the most able of them, Colonel Reid, of Barbadoes, has already resigned.

The late Vice President of the Board of Trade, has attempted to throw discredit on the proceedings of the Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting, and he has declared that the witnesses called before it were all on one side; that they stated whatever they pleased. Now if they stated what was obviously untrue, it is very much to Mr. Milner Gibson's discredit, as a man of ability, that they should have been permitted to do so, for he attended that Committee with the utmost regularity on the part of Government, and cross-examined every witness with great pertinacity, as I well know from experience.

I heard him endeavour to confuse simple planters,

* See Appendix, No. VI.

awestricken at finding themselves in the presence of such an egregious Minister of the Crown, by requiring them to explain statements extracted from old annual Registers, which he averred had been made by certain West Indians at the beginning of the present century; he perplexed me considerably by insisting that I should reconcile a representation which had emanated before I was born, from the House of Assembly of an island of which I knew nothing, 1500 miles distant from the colony with which I was practically acquainted, with the evidence I had had the honour of giving before Lord George's Committee. But I am certain that Mr. Milner Gibson will admit that three witnesses at least did their best for the Bill of 1846—I mean Messrs. Harbottle, Pickwood, and Hawes.

Mr. Harbottle's evidence was adduced to contradict mine, and to vindicate the accuracy of Mr. James Wilson's Cuban statistics. He delivered in two sets of estates accounts, in order to prove that the cost of production was higher, than the accounts of the Saratoga Ingenio, put in by myself, had shewn it to be.

He declared that he had been in Cuba when the news of the Bill of 1846 arrived there, and that that measure had caused no rise whatever in the price of produce or of slaves, as I and Captain Matson, R.N. who was also on the spot at the time, had asserted to have been the case; and singularly enough, the number of miles of railway, which Mr.

Harbottle stated to have been completed in 1846 in Cuba, 800, coincided exactly with the information given to the House of Commons on that point by the new Under Secretary to the Board of Control.

But, when cross-examined, Mr. Harbottle was forced to confess that the accounts of estates put in by him were concoctions of his own brain, and not accounts of existing Cuba Ingenios at all, and that he had actually left Cuba two months before the news of the passing of the Bill of 1846 could possibly have reached that island. With regard to his railway statistics, which tallied so admirably with those of Mr. Wilson, he subsequently declared at various periods of his cross-examination, that Cuba contained 470 miles of railway; that it contained 500; that it contained 560; that the S. Antonio line, which is 7½ miles in length, was, at a rough guess, from 70 to 80 miles in length; and he at last extricated himself from the disgrace of further prevarication by confessing that he knew nothing about the matter.

I think, my Lord, you will admit it is a suspicious circumstance—to use no harsher term—that the figures of a witness called on the part of Government, who by his ultimate confession knew nothing about the matter on which he gave fluent evidence, should have coincided so exactly with those of your new statistical recruit.

Lord Grey's witness, Mr. Pickwood, elicited the highest praises from Mr. Wilson, after an exami-

nation of three hours, during which he assented to every leading question propounded by that gentleman, but he broke down so piteously under cross-examination, that Mr. Wilson ultimately disavowed him altogether, and imputed him to Lord Grey. In attempting to prove the evils of absenteeism, he proved that the only prosperous estates in the colony to which he belonged were those of absentees —he shewed that he had managed his own estate for six years, and then handed it over to an attorney for six other years, who had, as was proved by the estate's books, doubled the crop, at exactly half the cost per ton at which Mr. Pickwood had himself manufactured sugar when a resident proprietor.

The examination of Mr. Hawes was chiefly remarkable for the costive and oracular nature of his replies. After having offered himself for examination, he appeared to discover that he had thereby exposed himself to questions which it might be inconvenient to answer fully, frankly, and fairly, and therefore very little information was elicited from him. He did not, however, appear before the Committee in vain. He was humane enough to console the despairing West Indians by declaring it to be his unqualified opinion, formed after taking one of those large and comprehensive Downing Street views of the question to which I have before adverted, that the price of sugar would shortly rise, *from causes which he could not foresee!*

I feel certain, my Lord, that either of these three

Government witnesses would have fared but scurvily in a court of law, had they presumed to give such testimony at the Old Bailey as they offered to the Committee of the House of Commons; and on the other hand, I defy Mr. Milner Gibson to instance a single attempt at discreditable prevarication or fencing in the testimony given before that Committee by Messrs. Miles, Tollemache, Higgins, Barkly, B. B. Greene, or Hankey, all West Indian proprietors.

And now, my Lord, I will say a word as to Mr. Milner Gibson himself, respecting his misapplication of Lord Harris's statement, that 10*s.* 5*d.* per cwt. is the price at which sugar can be grown throughout the West Indies.

In one line of a very long despatch, Lord Harris has said, that in some islands (Barbadoes and Antigua), sugar can, on the best estates, be grown at that cost—exclusive of interest on capital, and wear and tear of plant. But, *in the same line* he has added, "the average cost, however, is from 16*s.* 8*d.* to £1. 9*s.* 2*d.*"

Mr. Milner Gibson, who appears to be a quoter of the Grey school—has taken the first half of the line, suppressing the remainder, and has argued at considerable length upon this mutilated fact. The despatch goes on to describe the causes of this great disparity of cost, causes which depend entirely on the labour market, and over which, according to Lord Harris, the planters have no control—but as these facts were not necessary—as they were indeed

rather inimical to the case Mr. Gibson is desirous of establishing—he passed them over in silence, and made an abuse of Lord Harris's statement, for which I am convinced that upright and honest nobleman will not thank him.

Now, really, my Lord, if Lord Grey's dictum, that statesmen are justified in thus perverting the sense of the documents to which they refer, by quoting mutilated facts and figures, gains ground, the time of Parliament will be entirely consumed in exposing and denouncing such misconduct. Practices of a similar nature would meet with public censure, even in the legislative assemblies of Mississippi or Arkansas; and my legal advisers inform me, that when resorted to in England, as they occasionally are, by disreputable attorneys and barristers, they invariably are met by the severest judicial reproof.

In a short letter which I had the honour of addressing to your Lordship a few weeks ago, I ventured to stigmatise the politicians of Mr. Gibson's class as free-booters of the Manchester school—and was severely reproved by Mr. Bright and the Daily News for having done so; but, considering the purposes to which Mr. Gibson has perverted the accurate statements of the Governor of Trinidad, I cannot conceive that the term was in any degree misapplied. The most irksome and onerous portion of the labour which I have undergone in elucidating this question, has been incurred in exposing and in enabling others to expose the

misstatements of your new friend Mr. Wilson; accidental, of course, as all misstatements made by members of Parliament always are—but still, oddly enough, all telling in favour of the various theories he wishes to establish. You should really caution him, my Lord, if he means to retain the position which his very great abilities have earned for him in the House of Commons—to curb his imagination. It is a most dangerous gift when applied, as he is too fond of applying it, to arithmetic. When his flights of fancy are detected, too, he does not give himself much trouble in the way of recantation, he merely tries another flight in another direction.

The "flood of light" which Lord George Bentinck's exertions have let in on West Indian matters, have dispelled many illusions which have been the basis of various brilliant articles in the Economist. We no longer hear of the avalanche of free labour sugar, which "altogether irrespective and independent of the acts of the British legislature, either as regards slavery or protection against foreign producers," was to overwhelm our West Indian colonies from the East. French and German beet-root is no more spoken of by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Grey as likely to compete in Mincing Lane with British West Indian muscovado; it is admitted that under present circumstances the production of our colonies must inevitably dwindle—Martinique, Guadaloupe,

and Bourbon promise shortly to become St. Domingos on a small scale, and our eyes are consequently turned towards Cuba, Porto Rico, and Brazil for the requisite supplies of saccharine matter, now a necessary of European existence. The prospects in that quarter, as far as Mr. Milner Gibson's often quoted friend "the hard working and industrious artisan" is concerned, are indeed at present, most cheering; £88,000 worth of British machinery and 110,000 African slaves imported since the Bill of 1846, promise cheapness and abundance.

But then, my Lord, what are we to think of the consolations held out to the desponding British planters by yourself and Sir Robert Peel. You tell us to be of good cheer; that sooner or later the negro will successfully assert his rights, and that the slave-driver will meet with the fate which his iniquities deserve; in plain English, you say that you believe that there will shortly be insurrections in Cuba and Brazils, and that when those countries are given over to the savages, who now play therein the miserable part of overtasked sugar-making machines, British colonial produce will again become dear, and that we shall then, and not till then, be remunerated for our past losses.

I presume that you are both in earnest—if so, when your prophecies have come to pass, where do you propose to procure that—which you are now

procuring at the cost of our utter ruin and of the revival of the slave trade—cheap sugar? At what shop is "the hardworking and industrious British artisan" then to deal?

I have the honour to remain,

My Lord,

Your obedient Servant,

JACOB OMNIUM.

Lombard Street,
July 5th, 1848.

APPENDIX.

1.

Copy of a Despatch from Governor Lord Harris to Earl Grey.

"Trinidad, 18 September, 1847.
"(Received 22 October, 1847.)

"My Lord,

"I have been requested to forward a copy of a petition which has been lately prepared in this island, and which is addressed to the members of the House of Commons.

"*I feel that it is unnecessary for me to recommend any document coming from a British colony to your Lordship's consideration, as I am satisfied that it is certain to receive every proper attention from you.*

"I have already mentioned to your Lordship the distress existing at this time in the colony, and which is increasing daily, and amounts to an unprecedented stagnation of business, the cases of which are constantly brought to my notice; viz. estates having the finest promise of a larger crop than was ever previously produced, being almost abandoned from the want of means to pay for the necessary labour, are most distressing.

"I have also stated the chief cause of this, which is, though it is to a certain extent produced by the state of the money market, that the prices received for sugar this year

will not repay the cost of its production ; the planters are mostly without capital, many of them encumbered with debt, and nearly all accustomed to keep up the cultivation of their lands by advances from capitalists on the security of the coming crop ; but, from the knowledge of the above-mentioned facts, and from the badness of future prospects, the capitalists will not advance any money at all ; the consequence is, that the estates are obliged to be neglected, and, necessarily, the production must decrease, both in quality and quantity.

" Without entering into any of the details mentioned in the petition, either concerning anticipated concessions, or as applicable to future remedies, I do not hesitate to express to your Lordship my conviction, that if this colony is not to be left to subside into a state of comparative barbarism, which would result from the ruin of its larger proprietors, that some more than ordinary relief is necessary to support it in the contest in which it, in common with the other British West Indian colonies, is now engaged. Circumstanced as it is, I believe it incapable of successfully competing in the British market with the produce of countries in which slavery is still permitted, unless the advantages of free trade are conceded to it as well as the disadvantages ; and I would add, that relief should come speedily if it is to produce any effect.

" I have, &c.

" (Signed) HARRIS."

This despatch was one of those moved for before Christmas by Mr. Hume, and withheld by the Colonial Office, until the Sugar debates in February last were concluded. Surely it ought to have been in candour communicated to the House.

II.

Copy of a Despatch from Governor Reid to Earl Grey.

" Windward Islands, Barbadoes,
" 26 February, 1848.

" My Lord,

" In a despatch, marked St. Lucia, No. 16, dated 31st January, I stated that I had written little or nothing on the state of sugar cultivation during the year I have been here, and that this has been owing to the great difficulty of procuring data from which accurate results may be deduced, being unwilling to repeat mere verbal statements, which might mislead your Lordship, I added, that I am endeavouring to arrive at the average cost of making a cwt. of sugar on verified documents.

" Since the date of that despatch, I have passed a week in Grenada and two days in St. Vincent. I have obtained a few statements on the price of cultivation and been promised others, but I fear that I shall not be able to have any of them copied in time to accompany this despatch, nor have I had time sufficiently to consider their details, having only returned two days ago from Grenada and St. Vincent. I think it right, however, to state in general terms, that from all I learn, the cost of making sugar by free labour is greatly beyond the cost of making it by slave labour. My opinion is, that sugar cultivation by free labour cannot yet withstand competition on equal terms with slave labour, and that freedom should be nursed by protection for a considerable time to come. How long that time should be, your Lordship will understand that I cannot say. If there be no protection, the cultivation of sugar will be further given up in Grenada, and it will dwindle in all the Windward Islands, excepting Barbadoes.

"Whilst travelling in these islands, and amongst estates falling off in production, I felt a conviction that without protection, the most serious result for humanity would not be loss of sugar, but that the consummation of the greatest act of human legislation, the abolition of slavery, will be retarded, and perhaps endangered.

"I have, &c.

(Signed) "W. Reid, Governor."

III.

Copy of a Despatch from Governor the Right Hon. Sir C. E. Grey to Earl Grey.

"King's House, Jamaica, 21 February, 1848.
(Received 27 March, 1848.)

"My Lord,

"I have now the honour to lay before your Lordship two printed copies of a Report of a Committee of the House of Assembly of this island, which in the last Session of the Local Legislature was appointed to inquire into the depressed state of agriculture, and the cause of such depression, together with the evidence on which the Report was founded.

"In a former despatch, No. 17, February 7, I made some remarks on what I then understood to be the character of this evidence, without having had an opportunity of seeing it. Your Lordship, I think, will find those remarks borne out.

"I would more especially call to your Lordship's attention the evidence of Mr. M'Kinnon, Mr. M'Cornock, and Mr. Gladstone.

"The evidence of the last of these gentlemen, and of Mr. Jump, was that to which I referred as having shewn

some unexpected instances in the western part of the island of continuing profit; but I ought to add that Mr. Gladstone, having acquired by his successful exertions a moderate fortune, is said to be now about to abandon his occupation, and to retire from the island.

" With respect to the cost of cultivation, an examination of the tables will show that the stated general average of the cost per hundred weight, rests upon a basis which makes it a very unsafe criterion in many respects, and in none more so than as the criterion of a general average rate for the wages of agricultural labour.

" The main fact to be observed is, that a calculation of the losses of years of severe drought, or of the scanty produce of years of preparation, enters into this average; much in the same way as if an average of the cost of potato cultivation in Ireland were to be taken upon a series of four or five years, including the year of the great failure of the crop; or as if the first cost of making fences and farm buildings were to be thrown upon the crops of the first four or five years of any estate brought into new or extended cultivation.

" The planters and proprietors who have been subjected to the misfortune of such droughts, or who have been called upon for their accounts of certain specified years, are not to be blamed for striking their own particular averages in this way; but it is plain that they afford a totally erroneous criterion for districts which rarely, if ever, are subjected to similar misfortunes, or for estates which, prior to such dates, have been fairly launched, with all their works completed, and paid for by the produce; that it would be very unjust to found any scale of wages for happier districts, or for estates more completely appointed, upon the disasters or initiatory expenses of the others; and that estimates, which are thus obtained, cannot justly be said to show the neces-

sary expenditure in the production of a hundred weight of sugar, but rather the loss which is sustained in cases where the whole cost or much more than the whole cost ordinarily required for a large crop has been incurred, and only a very small and disproportionate produce has been obtained.

"Thus, in Mr. M'Cornock's table, and in Mr. Gladstone's, the difference between the average cost of the different years is comparatively trifling; whilst in Mr. M'Kinnon's table, the very first case in the whole Report, the average on Estate No. 1, for 1844, is given as £16. sterling per cwt., and for 1847 only 9*s.* 7*d.* which would be at once set down as error, if we did not observe that whilst the difference between the gross expenditure of the two years is only the difference between £2,098. and £2,650., the difference between the amount of produce is, that in 1844 the crop consisted of eight and a half hogsheads of sugar and one puncheon of rum, and in 1847 there were 171 hogsheads and 80 puncheons. Nearly the same remarks are applicable to the table of Mr. Hannaford, at page 198, whose annual averages on one estate vary from 16*s.* 1*d.* in 1842, to £22. sterling in 1846.

"My animadversion on these points is not occasioned by any opposition of feeling or indifference to the representations of the planters, but by my desire to be no party to anything which is calculated to mislead, and by my persuasion that the real interest of the planters is best promoted by causing the truth to be accurately known.

"*A permanent gazette price of less than* 30*s. the cwt. for West India muscovado, I firmly believe will cause the greater portion of the sugar cultivation of this island to be abandoned; and if I were to be called upon for a recommendation founded upon the most comprehensive and painstaking review of the whole subject which I am capable of making, it would be, that as far as still more important*

State affairs will permit, the duties on British muscovado should be brought towards the limit of 1d. per pound, and those on foreign to 2d., liable to special relaxations in favour of such foreign states as should bind themselves by treaty to give a similar measure of justice to their labourers as we give to ours.

" I have, &c.

(Signed) " CHARLES EDWARD GREY."

IV.

Copy of a Despatch from Governor Lord Harris to Earl Grey.

" Trinidad, 5 April, 1848.
(Received 5 May, 1838.)*

" My Lord,

" In reflecting on the depressed state of affairs in this colony, and on its prospects, which become daily more gloomy, I have endeavoured to discover whether some relief might not be afforded, some alleviation found, whereby the burden which now weighs down the planter might be lightened.

" It is sad and painful to behold men expecting ruin quickly to overtake them; it is perhaps sadder and more painful to see them struggling and toiling against adversity, but with their energies dulled, and their arms palsied, from the knowledge that their labours must be unremunerative, and that failure can be the sole result; it is most distressing to witness this, and at the same time to be aware that much of the misery from which they are suffering, and that

* This despatch, although received May 5th, was not communicated by the Colonial Office, to Lord G. Bentinck's Committee at all, although they did not agree upon their Report until the 29th of May.

which awaits them, is of a nature which they are unable to avert by any acts of her own.

"It is pitiable to witness a fine colony daily deteriorating; a land enjoying almost every blessing under Heaven, suffering from a shock from which it does not rally; *but the deepest pang of all, to an Englishman, is to see the hearts and the affections of a whole population becoming gradually alienated from the country which he loves.*

"Suffering from such feelings, I have deemed it my duty to suggest a plan which might afford some temporary relief; which, having been adopted for the benefit of other portions of the empire, might fairly be applied to this; and which, having been proposed for them by her Majesty's Government, and having received the sanction of Parliament, has all the weight of their authority to support it.

"It is impossible for me to express too forcibly the extent of the present distress, but I will give an extract from a communication made to me lately by Mr. Rennie, the very intelligent manager of the Colonial Bank, whose acuteness in business, and whose disinclination to yield to difficulties, is exceeded by none in the colony; and who, from his position, is enabled to acquire a more intimate knowledge of the actual state of affairs than any other person.

"'The position of the colony is at the moment most deplorable; bankruptcy and want stare every one in the face, and an extensive abandonment of estates appears inevitable, after the present crop, unless bold and immediate measures of relief are speedily afforded. Real estate is now perfectly valueless, and cannot be realized at any sacrifice; money has disappeared, and credit is entirely at an end; mercantile engagements can no longer be met, and parties of the highest probity, possessed of ample assets in houses and landed property, are cruelly forced into insolvency, owing to the inconvertibility of real estate.'

"The actual distress of the moment it is of course out of the power of the Government to obviate, but it is to the future to which it behoves it to look, and to endeavour, if possible, to afford relief.

"Previously to receiving Mr. Rennie's communication, I had intended addressing your Lordship upon the subject of a loan to the proprietors of estates, and his opinion has fortified my intentions.

"*Did I not see a prospect, I think a better one than in any other in the West Indies, of getting this colony through the present crisis,* I should not venture to propose that advances should be made; but looking to the fertility of its soil, and the almost certainty of favourable seasons, I believe that with assistance, there can be little doubt of its ultimate success.

"But to be enabled to carry on the cultivation there is an absolute want of money, and there is no probability of any being advanced by capitalists. The question, therefore, is, shall the cultivation be allowed to cease, and the estates to go to ruin? For neglect for a very short time in this climate ensures ruin; or shall such assistance be offered as would enable the cultivation to continue?

"Assistance has been afforded by Government to the proprietors of the soil in Ireland, it has been offered even in England, for the purpose of encouraging agricultural improvement; it might surely then be worthy of consideration whether the same might not be ventured on for the sake of saving, what I believe may at some future time prove to be a valuable colony. I will answer for it, that at least as much gratitude will be felt for any relief, as has been manifested in those quarters in which it has been already administered.

"With the doctrine which your Lordship has laid down

in your place in Parliament, that it is preposterous that the hard-working labourer in England should be obliged to pay a high price for his sugar, in order to keep the labourers of the West Indies in luxury and idleness, I fully and heartily concur; but the misfortune is, that the loss in the diminished price does not fall with comparatively any force on the labourer. It is the planter who suffers; he has continued his cultivation year after year, with the hope of recovering his previous losses, but they have only become greater, and he has been induced to pay higher wages than the return would warrant, and to introduce improvements, even with the same hope.

"*I could quote to your Lordship estates, as far as their soil is concerned, of great value, and giving previously to emancipation a large income, on which the whole of the redemption money was expended in improvements; which were entirely free from debt at that time, and which are now mortgaged almost to their full value; and their proprietors resident Creoles too, from being in good circumstances, reduced to the last extremities. In these cases the want of labour at a fair rate has been the chief cause of their embarrassments; they surely have some claim for assistance from the mother country.*

"I am aware of the difficulties of the Imperial Government; it is furthest from my wish to add to them, and I only offer the subject of a loan for the purposes stated above, as a suggestion which may be feasible, and which would be most acceptable.

"*Moreover, under the present grave circumstances of Europe and the world in general, I would add that if the power of England and her interests are to be maintained in this portion of it, and I think they are worth maintaining, it would not be impolitic that*

some sympathy of a practical nature should be shewn, and as early as practicable, by the mother country.

" Should it be possible to consent to my suggestion, I would recommend that the money should be lent, to be expended on estates solely for agricultural or manufacturing purposes; that a prior right of mortgage, and the security of the colonial government be given for loans; and that a discretionary power should be given to a Board of Commissioners, including the Governor, to select such persons as fitting subjects for a loan, whose cases should come within such rules as should be laid down as requisite conditions of the possibility of receiving assistance.

" I enclose a copy of Mr. Rennie's communication; I have not incorporated it in my despatch, as I do not agree in some of the views taken in it; but I think it may be interesting to your Lordship, as shewing the opinion of a person most capable of judging of the state of affairs, and fully versed in the subject which he discusses."

Enclosure in No. 4.

MEMORANDUM.

" The position of the colony is at the moment most deplorable; bankruptcy and want stare every one in the face, and an extensive abandonment of estates appears inevitable after the present crop, unless bold and immediate measures of relief are speedily afforded.

" Real estate is now perfectly valueless, and cannot be realized at any sacrifice. Money has disappeared, and credit is entirely at an end. Mercantile engagements can no longer be met, and parties of the highest probity, pos-

sessed of ample assets in houses and landed property, are cruelly forced into insolvency, owing to the inconvertibility of real estate.

"The reduced state of the colony is doubtless the result of excessive losses sustained by proprietors for the last seven years, arising out of high wages and an unsteady supply of labour.

"*Remedies.*—The expenses of cultivation must be contracted. With that object in view, it is proposed by Government to provide us with more emigrants; but it appears questionable whether much, if any advantage can be anticipated from this under existing circumstances, experience having shewn, that in the absence of stringent (compulsory) labour regulations, African and Coolie emigration into this colony, as heretofore prosecuted, although beneficial to a certain extent, has proved inapplicable, and far too expensive to be continued. Besides, the relief to be anticipated from a future accession to our population is quite too distant to save the present holders of property from impending ruin, the majority of whom are heavily incumbered, and can no longer command capital to cultivate their estates, nor will it suffer to induce others to take their place.

"Had the concessions lately yielded by Government in respect to procuring labour from Africa and India, and the proposal to transport captured Africans to the West Indies at the cost of the Home Government been granted 10 years ago, they would have proved of incalculable benefit; but these remedies, and the others recently promulgated in Parliament, have been withheld so long, that coming at this late period they are of very secondary importance. Protective duties, by increasing prices through a monopoly of the home market, would, no doubt, meliorate our condition for a time; still, to compete successfully with the slave grower, and to render free labour permanently remunerative

in this climate, much more is required than the temporary expedient of reducing wages by the introduction of Coolies or Africans; and apart from mechanical appliances, more reliance than heretofore must be placed in inculcating industrious and settled habits amongst the labourers, who, so far from advancing in civilization during the last two or three years, when affluence and comfort, unknown to any other labouring population have been within their reach, with little or no toil, they have actually retrograded and evinced but little desire to accumulate wealth, affording too good reason to fear that under adversity they would revert to a state of barbarism.

"During the past two years great exertions have been used by sugar growers here to lower the cost of production through a diminished rate of wages, and by getting more work performed: this has caused dissatisfaction among the labourers, and increased their migratory and idle inclinations, which has resulted in a visible inattention to their provision grounds, an evil of serious import, operating unfavourably against reduced cost of production, by rendering the labourers totally dependent upon high money wages to pay for imported articles of consumption, an alarming position to be in with the prospect of curtailed employment, through sugar cultivation being diminished, if not wholly abandoned.

"The general excuse offered by the labourers for their inattention to raising provisions is, that they are so liable to be robbed and turned off estates. True, this is the case, but the latter is invariably caused by their own fickleness and perverse acts. Still this feeling of insecurity is unfortunately abroad, and would it not be desirable, even by legislative interference, to secure to the labourer in some way the fruits of his industry, either by appraisement or otherwise? The subject is surrounded with difficulties, yet it is

one well worthy of much attention and reflection; perhaps the least objectionable mode of arriving at the end desired would be by altering the present system of mixing up house-rent with wages, a specific contract based on a money payment, or a weekly or monthly contribution of labour should be made for the former, including provision ground without reference to the latter.

" Yet the main question, how are the sugar estates to be preserved after crop, remains to be considered.

" Properly regulated immigration is essential to the ultimate prosperity of Trinidad, but the immediate and pressing demand is for money; fresh capital is required to maintain estates, and to revivify the enormous sums that have been expended in sugar cultivation for the last seven or eight years; without this all will be sunk, which will consummate the utter ruin of the planter, the failure of the emancipation experiment, and entail starvation upon the labouring population of the colony.

" Capitalists can no longer be found who will risk fresh money in the hopeless enterprise of sugar cultivation here; those who have been directly connected with it have expended their all, and are without the ability to hazard more; and it is visionary to expect that capital will be attracted from any other sources until Government shews a disposition to assist the West India colonies.

" To Government, I fear, planters have alone to trust for vitality, and to be of the slightest service, the relief must be immediate; for in this climate it is well known that sugar estates neglected for twelve months, become comparatively of little value; both buildings and cultivation go to wreck.

" The colonial government being without sufficient credit to raise money for its own wants, is without the power to

relieve; to the Home Government, therefore, must the colony appeal for support.

"Government has already come to the relief of home agriculturists, and made large advances for drainage and improvements of lands in Great Britain; can there be any sound reason why colonial agriculturists should be refused similar aid? especially after the Government has proclaimed its intention of furnishing us with the means of procuring additional labourers; and ministers lately stated publicly that the West Indies offered a safe and lucrative investment for capital.

"The whole amount required to pay wages, and maintain cane cultivation in this colony, from the termination of the present crop season up to 1st March next, I estimate at £150,000., and that close upon one-half that amount, say £70,000. to £75,000. would be required by proprietors, who are without the means of continuing their cultivation; this I propose should be loaned under the immediate direction of the Executive Government, and that such advances made by the Government should take precedence of all other securities: (rate of interest, and period of payment requires consideration.)

"This mode of supporting an isolated interest will be objected to by many, as being contrary to correct political principles, and I allow it would even prove unavailing should Great Britain continue to stimulate slavery, by receiving Cuba and Brazils sugars in the home market on the same terms as those from her own colonies.

"It remains, therefore, only to inquire whether these colonies are to be maintained as exporting countries, or are they to be sacrificed to the slave states? On the one hand, if they are to be maintained, fresh capital (as well as labour) must be forthcoming for that purpose. And on the other, if they are to be sacrificed, will Government then be relieved

from the necessity of providing capital? I apprehend not; in the one case it is asked for to support and promote industry, with a prospect of repayment, while on the other, it will be demanded to preserve over a million of paupers, in the West India colonies alone, from starvation."

V.

"MEMORIAL to the Right Honourable the Earl Grey, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, &c. &c. &c.

"MY LORD,

"We pray your earnest attention to the following facts.

"We, the undersigned, are the owners of 19, and the lessees of 13 sugar estates in the west end of the island of Jamaica, on which properties we employ daily an average of 2,898 labourers, who represent families numbering 14,490 people, lately redeemed from slavery. Our sugar estates, 32 in number, are expected to make this year 2,796 hogsheads of sugar and 1,354 puncheons of rum, which will cost us, by accurate computation, 60,315*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.* We have no hope of realizing more than 15*l.* per hogshead and 14*l.* per puncheon (the maximum price of the market at present), at which rate our produce will bring 60,896*l.* leaving a balance over our expenditure of 580*l.* 6*s.* 7*d.* to go against six per cent., the common rate of interest which money bears in the colony, and which on 60,315*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.* would be 3,618*l.* 18*s.* 9*d.* Our capital invested on these

32 sugar estates in live stock and implements of husbandry, amounts in live stock to 32,094*l.*; in implements, to 14,630*l.* upon which wear-and-tear capital we receive no interest whatever. The 19 sugar estates that we own cost us 95,784*l*, and we pay a rental for the 13 other estates of 3,110*l.* per annum, which sunk capital is likewise wholly profitless.

We are not so absurd as to expect that the British nation should abandon the principles of free trade, now upheld by the majority of the people, in order to afford us protection, but we submit it cannot be consonant with the spirit of free trade to give to the slave colonies a monopoly of the sugar market by allowing them to cultivate sugar with means (slaves) denied to us; and we submit they must have that monopoly if the British West Indies cease to supply the market with sugar, as your Lordship must have ascertained that a supply from the East Indies cannot be obtained at the rates of slave grown produce.

Now we are resident proprietors, and all of us, with one exception, have purchased and leased our properties since the Emancipation Act. It will be evident from the facts stated that we cannot cultivate for another year; indeed, we have not the means, unaided, of taking off the present crop, and the British West India merchants are now unable to assist us, and of course disinclined, where there is no hope of profit, or even of recovering their advances. If we, being proprietors and lessees, living on and managing our own properties, brought up to tropical agriculture, and availing ourselves of every practical improvement, have only such a result to exhibit as is set forth in the statement of these facts, the inference is conclusive that the position of the absentee proprietor or mortgagee, represented by paid agencies, is still more deplorable. It is evident that unless some mode of suppressing slavery and the slave

trade more effectual than that hitherto pursued be adopted, and without immediate aid, in the shape of money loans, sugar cultivation, upon which 300,000 of the emancipated negroes are wholly dependent, must cease in Jamaica.

"But our object in submitting these facts to your Lordship is to enable you to draw your own inferences, and suggest your own remedies, and we beg you will consider our desperate position as an excuse for troubling you with the statement.

"We have, &c.

(Signed) "H. A. WHITELOCK,"

(and 15 others.)

[This is the document quoted by Lord Grey to prove the prosperity of resident planters. He only, however, quoted the lines in italics, but did not state the nature of the document—accessible at the time to him alone.]

VI.

The following details afford a fair specimen of the results of Lord Grey's new system of selecting from the despatches of his Governors such facts, or half facts, as support his own preconceived views, and of disregarding whatever appears dissonant with those views. They are taken from a despatch of Lord Harris, published in the Appendix to the Seventh Report of the Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting, p. 271.

When Coolie immigration was conceded to Trinidad, Lord Ripon, then President of the Board of Control, requested the East India Company to seek out some intelligent officer, well acquainted with the language and the habits of those people, to go out to Trinidad, in order that

they might be properly managed and cared for on their arrival in the island.

Major Fagan was accordingly recommended for that service. Lord Harris and Major Fagan, together drew up a set of rules for the conduct of the Coolies and their employers, under which they remained for some time. Lord Grey, however, wrote out to disallow them. Governor Lord Harris instantly withdraw the code to which the absentee legislators of Downing Street objected—observing, modestly enough, in a despatch to Lord Grey, informing him that he had done so, " Doubtless there were numerous faults in these rules; from the circumstances of the case, they had been drawn up at a very short notice; but all will allow who had the opportunity of judging that, during their operation, *the Coolies were healthy, well clothed, generally contented, and improving daily in habits of industry.*"

Lord Grey sent out in their place regulations concocted by himself in Downing Street—with extraordinary ability, doubtless, but in utter ignorance of the habits of the people and the peculiar nature of the country and climate to which they had been transplanted.

Four months after Downing Street legislation had been applied to the immigrants, Lord Harris wrote to state, that on the substitution of Lord Grey's regulations for those composed by himself and Major Fagan, they had all deserted the estates on which they had been located, and were wandering about the colony, naked and idle; that the hospitals were full of them; that 250 had died in the public hospitals; that their skeletons were daily discovered in the woods and in the cane pieces; and that "he believed in no country had greater suffering been undergone than by these unfortunate people in the shape of disease, starvation, and ultimate death," since Lord Grey had *adopted his facts and disregarded his opinions.* Lord Harris explains the matter

thus:—"*I have felt the more anxious for the success of this* (Lord Grey's) *law, because it did not emanate from myself.* I have no doubt of the wisdom of the principle which your Lordship has laid down, that we should seek "to place the immigrants in a situation in which they might be acted upon by the same motives by which men are impelled to labour in industrious countries."

Now I would, with all deference, submit that it is, from what I have already shewn, impossible to place the immigrant in a situation similar to that of labourers in industrious countries; "*the circumstances of the countries, of the facilities for communication, for travelling, for justice, for police, being so very different.*"

A more pregnant example could not be cited of the evil results of the ignorant confidence which has long dictated the proceedings of the Colonial Office, and which has never been more conspicuous than during the last two years.

One of Major Fagan's regulations, to which Lord Grey *especially* objected, ran as follows:

"Rule 13. It having been brought under the cognizance of his Excellency the Governor, that the Coolies on several estates have began to indulge in rum drinking, in many instances selling their clothes, and even their rations, to procure for themselves this deleterious liquid, resident proprietors and managers are earnestly called upon to exert themselves, by every means in their power, to arrest at once the growth of what must tend to the nullification of every exertion that may be made for the religious and social improvement of these Coolie labourers—a people who have such strong claims on the philanthropy as well as on the sense of self-interest of their employers."

THE END.

NORMAN AND SKEEN, PRINTERS, MAIDEN LANE, COVENT GARDEN.





